

Seoul's Envoy in PR Blitz for Korea-U.S. FTA

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Korean ambassador to the U.S. Lee Tae-shik is upset at continued delay in ratification of the Korea-U.S. FTA in the U.S. Congress. "If European products dominate the Korean market, the U.S. should not find fault with Korea," he said according to the Korea Economic Daily on Thursday.

At a rally and press conference to call for the passage of pending trade agreements at the Cannon Terrace in the U.S. House of Representatives building, Washington D.C., Wednesday, Lee said "I don't know how many times I've visited this building so far, and it doesn't matter how many times I still need to come here as long as the FTA gets passed." The event was organized by a number of parties including the U.S. Chamber of Commerce. Lee has met with U.S. Congressmen more than 300 times to persuade them to ratify the FTA, which is facing objection from the Democrats, who have a majority in both the House of Representatives and the Senate.

"American products used to have the largest market share in Korea's import market, but now it's only in third or fourth place. For the U.S. to move up the ranking in the Korean market share, ratification of the FTA is essential," Lee said. "Korea is ready to lower tariffs on U.S. products and dismantle trade barriers through the FTA." Lee warned the U.S. should not blame Korea if the Korea-EU FTA is ratified before the U.S. deal and European products take over dominance in the Korean market.

Lee talked about a recent trip to the Hyundai Motor plant in Montgomery, Alabama. "The car factory revived the local economy by creating a lot of new jobs in what used to be a grazing field for herds of livestock," he said. "We should create more similar cases throughout the U.S. through the FTA"

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